



Exercise with a visual limitation

Tips for dealing with and guiding an athlete who is blind

Initial situation

We assume that an athlete who is blind can at best see a light source, contours of objects or shadows.

- 1 You meet a blind athlete by standing in front of them and saying your name. Do this even if you already know the person.
- 2 Ask whether they have been blind since birth or have seen previously. Have them explain what their expectations are, what they are worried about and what guidance they desire. Explain what you do and do not find comfortable.
- 3 Take into account that not all movements are automated and that athletes may struggle to picture their body parts relative to each other.

Organisation

- 4 Explore the most important areas together, such as the dressing room, toilet, canteen and gym. Reserve a fixed and easily accessible spot in the dressing room for the athlete. Have athletes indicate what they can do independently in terms of mobility and what they need help with.
- 5 Indicate where dangerous protrusions, obstacles and steps are. Fixed setups and a fixed order in the programme provide a lot of oversight and recognition.
- 6 Use guide lines where possible. These can be walls and fixed obstacles or other points of recognition. Or make guide lines yourself out of mats or bands. You can also apply relief to floors with tape and rope.
- 7 Have the athlete participate in an activity as independently as possible. Use a buddy where necessary.

Coaching/guidance/differentiation

- 8 Visual information and expressions that are with words like these, this, that and there have no added value. Facial expressions also do not come across.
- 9 Take the time to explain the movement assignment and have them feel what movement you mean. Agree where and whether you can grab the athlete. Repeat the assignment a few times for better memory.
- 10 Also indicate when there are irregularities or if the surface changes. Provide short and clear commands. Besides your voice, you can also indicate direction by clapping your hands, knocking on something, whistling or using the clock (e.g. walk towards one o'clock).
- 11 Agree on a signal to stop an activity, such as a whistling signal or the word stop.
- 12 Make sure you are recognisable as a duo on the public road with the special yellow vest with three black dots.

Evaluation

- 13 After a while, evaluate together how their exercise experience is and in what area they may want to be supported even better. Also indicate what you feel comfortable with as a supervisor.

More information and instruction

For more information and instructional videos, go to <https://www.visio.org/sports>